

Decorations by Jesus  
Pastor Joel Hess  
St. James, Chicago

Jesus loves messed up, undecorated houses.

Here we are again, trying to make Christmas special, maybe more than ever. We compete with the neighbors like Clark Griswold. We decorate the outside and inside - some of us for fun, some out of desperation. We really get serious as we prepare our house for a visitor. We put out our best. We hide our worst. At my last house we had an old landline outlet that was in the middle of a wall. We always tried to hide it with an advent calendar or wreath. Advent celebrates and prepares us for God's arrival. What if you were getting your house ready for God to visit? Would you hide those bad parts of your lives? Would you put out your best works?

Christmas celebrates God's coming into the world personally. His divine reign invaded our evil and dying one. This should have been a frightening experience. John the Baptizer surely thought so. Yet surprisingly, God did not come in condemnation, power, or vengeance. Instead, He came in the flesh, as an infant, approachable and even vulnerable. He didn't visit the nicely decorated, perfectly put together charades of houses. He visited those who couldn't hide their sins behind status or power. He visited those who could not hide their dying bodies behind robes and accolades. Jesus came to our messed up houses with all our dirty laundry on the floor and the table not even set. He even hung between two people who could not hide the fact they were wrongdoers and they were dying! And there He took our condemnation, our shame, our crooked ways, and buried them with His dead body forever. You don't need to hide your sins before God! He has come to take them anyway. You don't need to put out your best works to impress Him. He actually loves you despite your sins. In fact Jesus has come to decorate you! As it says in Isaiah 61:10, He gives us His righteous robes in exchange for our ugly ones. He places His ornaments of hope, peace, joy and love on our lives and in our heart. What do you buy a God who has everything? Nothing. He has come to serve you!